Early Childhood De[illegible]nent Funding Allocation
Questions and Answers

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Early Childhood Development Grants

What is the Early Childhood Development Grant initiative?

The goal of these grants will be to begin to build a comprehensive system of early childhood programs to meet the needs of young children and their families. The menu of programs will look different depending on community needs. Programs which provide child care, parenting support, child care resource and referrals will be considered eligible for funding. The grants process will include an application process, an allocation of funding assistance and an evaluation and accountability process. Community groups must be non-profit societies in good standing and will have to demonstrate partnerships and support for their projects.

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Are the Early Childhood Development Grants going to create more childcare spaces?

Yes, as well as innovative solutions to supporting parents and children. Programs such as Childcare Referral and Resource programs, playgroups, parenting programs, or other programs which will support children will be developed. Communities will be involved in defining their needs, identifying the existing resources for enhancement, new partnerships, and new programs.

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Stabilization Grant Program

What is the Nova Scotia Child Care Stabilization Grant?

The purpose of the Nova Scotia Child Care Stabilization Grant is to recognize the important role and contribution of child care staff, and to support the continued development of quality child care in the Province. The objective of this funding is to address the concerns respecting recruitment and retention in the Province's child care labour force by allocating funds to full day licensed child care facilities to be specifically dedicated to staff wages and benefits.

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Who is eligible to receive the Stabilization Grant?

All full-day child care facilities that have a valid license under the Nova Scotia Day Care Act and Regulations as of November 27, 2001, and have submitted an application on or before February 28, 2002, are eligible for funding retroactive to April 2001. New full-day child care centres will be eligible for funding upon date license is effective.

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What was the process used to determine how the stabilization funding would be distributed?

In July 2001 the Minister appointed a subcommittee of the Nova Scotia Round Table on Child Care, reporting to the Executive Director of Family and Children's Services and the Child Care Funding Review Working Group. The mandate of this group was to reach a consensus on a method to distribute funding dedicated for the purpose of supplementing the wages of eligible child care staff in full day licensed child care facilities. This subcommittee, a cross-sectoral group representing both the commercial and non-profit sectors, reached a consensus and recommended a formula to determine the financial allocation for each individual child care centre. Members of the subcommittee included:

- representation from the Nova Scotia Round Table on Child Care, including the Chair, RTCC
- representatives from the child care sector, inclusive of non-profit, unionized and commercial child care
- representatives from the Department of Community Services (head office and field staff)
- a representative from the early childhood education training sector.

The recommendations of the subcommittee were considered by government in determining how the ECD funds would be distributed.

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Who is implementing the Nova Scotia Child Care Stabilization Grant?

This is an initiative of Early Childhood Development Services of the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. Implementation of the Stabilization Grant represents recommended action as outlined in the provincial framework *Our Children ... Today's Investment, Tomorrow's Promise,* available at: www.gov.ns.ca/coms/files/ecd.asp

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What information assisted the subcommittee in making their decision?

Data was collected from the Child Care Centre Questionnaire which was forwarded to all full-day licensed child care centres in Nova Scotia in May 2001. Information was gathered on such things as current salaries, training levels, licensed capacity, days of operation, etc. Members also reviewed funding models from other provinces and jurisdictions, proposals presented to the government from Nova Scotia child care advocates, and other relevant research.

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How will these new dollars actually be allocated to the child care centre?

The formula to determine the financial allocation for each individual child care centre will be based on a calculation which considers the ratio of staff under the Day Care Act and Regulations. Regulation 22(1) requires that "the ratio for staff working directly with children shall be no lower than:

(a) one staff person to eight children for children between the ages of 36 months and five years;

(b) one staff person to every six toddlers;

(c) one staff person to every four infants.

Regulation 22(5) requires the "ratio of staff working directly with children shall be no lower than one staff to fifteen children, for children five years of age and over."

The licensed capacity for the age group will determine the minimum number of full-time equivalent child care teachers each centre is required to have on site. The centre will provide the number of trained staff and untrained staff (both full-time and part-time) that the centre currently has employed. These calculations will be pro-rated based on the number of days of operation. That is, where a centre is open for less than 261 days a year the total allocation will proportionally be reduced.

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What will this new money mean for the average salary of child care workers in this province?

Retroactive to April 1, 2001 salaries of staff will rise by an amount to be determined by the individual child care centre's administration. Through the evaluation process, government will have a record of the wages paid in each centre in 2001. Following receipt of the grant, the employer's contribution to hourly wage rates may not be less than it was when the facility applied for the Stabilization Grant.

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What can the funding received through the Child Care Stabilization Grant be used for?

These funds must be used to enhance either wages or benefits of child care staff. However, a minimum of 80% of the funds allocated to a facility must be spent on increasing the wages for child care staff either through hourly wage increases or bonuses. The remaining 20% must be spent on wages or benefits. The funding provided through this initiative must be used in accordance with the "Terms and Conditions" forwarded with the Child Care Stabilization Grant application forms (also posted on the NSDCS website, under *Nova Scotia Child Care Stabilization Grant).* The Terms and Conditions include requirements to direct child care centre administrators on the appropriate distribution of the dollars These funds are **not** to be used to enhance the wages of the following:

- Directors/Administrators/ Owner Operators who are not working directly for, and on the site of, the child care facility
- Consultant Specialists
- Kitchen staff
- Bookkeepers
- Support staff, e.g. secretaries, van drivers, administrative assistants, etc.
- Maintenance staff
- Board members
- Any other staff deemed to be ineligible by the Department of Community Services.

Any funds that are not spent in accordance with the Terms and Conditions will be considered surplus and must be returned to the Department of Community Services.

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What will be required of child care centres in order to receive the Stabilization Grant?

An initial and yearly application will be required. On an annual basis, a stabilization grant utilization statement will be submitted by operators. Centres will also be required to demonstrate a commitment to professional development for those child care staff who are untrained. Child care centres will be expected to be in compliance with the Day Care Act and Regulations.

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If my centre is awarded the Stabilization Grant, how long will I receive it?

This is a five-year federal/provincial initiative. The grant will be awarded and reviewed on a yearly basis using the government fiscal year. This year's funding will be provided as a lump sum payment retroactive to April 1, 2001. The grant continues until April 1, 2006. Starting in the 2002-2003 fiscal year, the stabilization grant cheques will be forwarded to your centre in installments.

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If I fill out an application form am I guaranteed funding support for the 2001/02 April to March fiscal year?

In order to receive the Stabilization Grant, your annual application form must be: complete; submitted before February 28, 2002; and, certified and signed by the centre's authorized signing officers. In addition the centre must have a valid license to operate a child care centre in Nova Scotia.

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If I manage more than one child care facility, can I fill out one Child Care Stabilization Grant application for all of them?

No. A separate application form must be completed for each licensed facility.

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If I have missed the February 28, 2002, deadline, can my child care centre still receive the Child Care Stabilization Grant?

No. You will not be able to receive funding support for this fiscal year 2001/02. The next application period will be for the government fiscal year April 1st, 2002 to March 31st, 2003. Applications for that year will be sent out in the spring of 2002.

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When will a child care facility that is approved for the Child Care Stabilization Grant expect to receive notification of funding?

Notification of funding is dependent upon the date that your application is submitted. The sooner your completed application is forwarded to the Department the sooner it will be processed and cheques forwarded. Written notification will also be forwarded detailing the amount of the stabilization grant. This written notice must be posted in a prominent and accessible location in the child care facility.

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Some child care centres might choose not to participate in this initiative. Will staff of those centres be notified that they will not experience a wage change?

All full-day child care centres will receive the application form and associated Terms and Conditions. It is the responsibility of the individual operators to notify staff that their child care centre has chosen not to apply for the Stabilization Grant.

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The formula to allocate the funds is based on required child staff ratios as per the Day Care Act and Regulations. What if a child care centre, in an effort to improve quality, has even lower child staff ratios than is required of them. Will they still only receive an allocation based on the minimum ratios?

Yes. Government must implement this stabilization grant in a manner which is fair and consistent and which allows for containment of costs. Funds will therefore not be provided on behalf of teachers where a centre has opted to have better rations than those required under the Day Care Act and Regulations.

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Why is government opting to leave the *current "Salary Enhancement Grant"* in place?

The current salary enhancement grant has kept child care affordable for low income families. The removal of the current salary enhancement grant would directly reduce the revenues of the non-profit centres that have subsidized spaces. As they would not be able to raise parent fees to offset this loss in revenue their financial operations would in many cases be seriously destabilized. This would also have an impact on accessibility of child care for families. Having child care centres close due to the loss of the salary enhancement grant would defeat

the purpose of the initiative. The current salary enhancement grant will be reviewed and reinvented in the context of proposed future changes to the child care subsidy system.

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Why would government provide stabilization grants to only full-day centres and not part-day centres?

Government is trying to stabilize the current full-day sector as we seek to build a better child care system for Nova Scotia one step at a time. Our first priority therefore is to ensure quality in a child care system for parents who require full-day child care due to employment or studies. Full-day programs are generally more expensive to operate due to the lower staff to child ratio and other regulatory requirements. For these reasons, we are allocating the stabilization grant to the full day programs, recognizing that a large number of full-day centres operate part-day programs. This being said, we do appreciate the value of part-day programs and will give them full consideration as we proceed to build a quality child care system through the Early Childhood Development Grant Program.

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How do I handle inquiries from parents?

Please refer interested parents to the information on the Child Care Stabilization Grant Program found on our Nova Scotia Department of Community Services web site at **www.gov.ns.ca/coms/files/ecd.asp**

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Is there a way I can talk to someone if I have more questions?

If you have any questions concerning this initiative please call our Early Childhood Development at 424-0766.

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Training and Professional Development – Q&A's

What commitment has the Government made regarding funding for early childhood training?

The Government of Nova Scotia has allocated $1 million to be used for training initiatives in early childhood education. The government is committed to improving and expanding training opportunities and professional development for early childhood educators in the province. Evidence shows that educator training and education has a direct relation to the quality of child care and child development outcomes. We recognize the importance of teacher education, and we want to support the continued development of quality child care in the province.

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What process is in place to determine how the funding for ECE training will be

allocated?

A working group was appointed in October 2001, to report to the Executive Director of Family & Children's Services. The purpose of this group is to develop a framework by which the funding will be allocated to provide training opportunities for the Early Childhood Education sector. The members of the working group included representatives from the Department of Community Services, the Nova Scotia Round Table for Child Care, the ECE training sector and the child care community.

A survey will be sent to a random selection of licensed child care centres across the province to assess the training needs of educators in the early childhood field. As well, province-wide stakeholder consultations will be held. A report with recommendations will be prepared for March, 2002.

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Who will be eligible for this funding and when will it be available?

The details on eligibility and availability of funding is currently being developed. Once it is finalized, the information will be made available to the child care community and posted on the Department of Community Services website.

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If staff have equivalency now, are they considered "trained"?

As per the Nova Scotia Day Care Act and Regulations (21A), staff with equivalency are considered "trained".

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Will equivalency be eliminated in the near future? If so, when?

A clause was included in the regulations enacted in 1984 which defined what combination of credit and non-credit education credentials and experience would qualify as "equivalent to trained" in order to meet training requirements. No expiry date was put on that clause.

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Who can I call if I have more questions?

Call Early Childhood Development Services at (902) 424-0766.

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Inclusion of Special Needs Children

What initiatives are included in the $500,000 designated to support children with special needs ?

This funding will be used province-wide to provide:

- additional supports for licensed child care centres to enhance inclusion opportunities for children with special needs, further enabling the children with special needs to be active participants in the daily program
- additional spaces for children with special needs in inclusive licensed child care settings throughout the province
- training opportunities for staff working with children with special needs in licensed child care settings, to further enable the development and implementation of inclusive child care practices.

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When will the funding be available and how do centres apply ?

Details of the funding for inclusion of special needs children in child care centres are currently being developed and will be distributed to the child care community and posted on the Department of Community Services website once finalized. If you have any questions now about the program, please call Early Childhood Development Services at (902) 424-0766.

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